

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

SUBJECT: Father Thomas Fahey, Pastor of Holy Trinity (Catholic) Church

DATE: February 9, 1990

PLACE: Conference room at new Rectory of Holy Trinity Catholic Church at  
1836 Hot Springs St. in Cheyenne

INTERVIEWER: Mark Junge

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TRANSCRIBER:(up to page 9: Kelly Sheridan)

PLACE: Department of Commerce  
*Wyoming Annals*  
Barrett Building  
Cheyenne

TF: We are the new Rectory at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Cheyenne Wyoming.  
And it's the address is 1836 Hot Springs, Cheyenne Wy.

MJ: What room is this?

TF: This is a conference room. And ..

MJ: Many important conferences are held here.

TF: Yes (laugh), the Pastor reigns as King in here (laugh).

MJ: I have here.

TF: Oh that is a picture of my parents. Well now, hell. How did you find that? (laugh)

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MJ: Betty Griffith gave me some pictures.

TF: He did! Well God, Heaven's above! (laugh)

MJ: Can you read that for me? And pronounce everything the way it should be pronounced.

TF: Oh, dear God. Apart from modern migrants to the largest city, to the larger cities, it can be said that Fahey (long a sound). well, now of course, the way they pronounced Fahey (long a sound), as Fahey (short a sound) and know they say Fahey (long a sound). Where here they say Fahey (long a sound).

MJ: Can, does anybody pronounce your name correctly?

TF: No - No.

MJ: Fahey (short a sound) would be.

TF: Fahey (short a sound). Is almost exclusively a culty-balway name. Though of course, it is also to be found in the areas bordering that counties that is not tipperary. Except on Umane (short a sound), Umane (long a sound), the center of the patromonie. Which they held at proprietors up to the time of the Crimilian upheaval. And when most of them still the while is lock gray. Their territory was known as Pobble Wencharkalfrahey. Which means the country inhabitant by and belonging to the Fahey's (short a sound). And this Fahey (short a sound) homeland, there is a place the modern name of which is Fahey (long a sound) Village. Fahey (long a sound) or Fahey (short a sound) in Irish. Well, what do you know? That's news to me (laugh). Where the heck did you find this! Huh?

#### **countermark 2:04**

MJ: Betty Griffith, came up with this.

TF: She did?

MJ: Yes, she did.

TF: Oh, goodness - women. (laugh)

MJ: See they've got you nailed now and they've got some things on you that you don't even know about.

TH: That's right ... (mumbling). There, see, that's surprised me Page 3

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to tell you the truth because they were in contact when I celebrated my fortieth. They were in contact with my sisters back in Ireland. And this is how they got some of this - stuff. I would never give them this (laugh). No, I would not! But they were back to my sisters and got a lot of this information. Yes, we still have an awful father here, he was so disgusted looking (laugh). And this was a O'Fahey, what do you call it?

MJ: Crest?

TF: Crest, yea. I really don't know what it means.

MJ: Was the O'Fahey family, was it royalty in Ireland?

TF: No, no, no. You know, when I was growing up as a kid. My father would tell us all these things, you know. Of course, I wasn't going to be interested. Just like a kid, I was going to play ball, you know. But he had all this history, you know. And now I wished, later on, I wished that I would have listened to him when he was telling us these things. And I, see that's a good idea, if we got, if we had that at that time we probably would treasure that now.

MJ: I'm sure you would.

TF: Yea.

MJ: This is the date of your birth here on your information sheet - this life essentials questionnaire you have as October. But what is the exact date? No! No! I take that back

TF: December

MJ: December 6, 1919.

TF: Yes.

MJ: Okay, the date you arrived in Wyoming was, ah, October 1947.

TF: Yah, Okay.

MJ: Okay, what were your parents' names?

TF: Junes and Nora, Nora Fahey or Nora Nighland. Nora Nighland.

MJ: What were their back grounds? Have they always been in Ireland?

TF: Yah, there were always, they were. Yes, they're from neighboring parishes. They went to the same parish, but they were neighboring parishes. And they were both from farming stock. They were what you might say, country people.

MJ: Now in Ireland, the parish is like a county here?

TF: Yah, yah it,...no. A parish in Ireland is more like here like down in Louisiana, a parish, I think, is a county. That wasn't the way. A parish was a, we had the counties too you see. We have it here a county Galway. A county Galway was, would be like a would be more like a, yah, like Laramie county here. And then the county would be broken up into parishes.

MJ: So, but they weren't cities?

TF: No.

MJ: The cities were something, then again, the cities were something besides.  
TF: Yah.  
MJ: Okay.  
TF: You had county Galway. You have Galway city, which is, about the size of our Cheyenne, actually is about the same size as Galway city. But then you have Galway county all around it and it would be just like Laraime county.  
MJ: That was farming country then, Galway County?  
TF: Yes, most of it was farming country some of it was pretty poor.  
MJ: What did they raise?  
TF: It was Galway county is on the sea coast. It's on the it's next...President Kennedy he visited Galway when he was over there. And he got up on the platform he said, "I can see Boston!" (laugh). I can see Boston, and he named all the names in Boston, the Irish names, you know that were in Boston and they gave him a great cheer. Oh, that was great, you know. When he says, "I look down, I look across the ocean and I see Boston." So Galway is just on the seaboard on the sea coast. And at one time, the transatlantic liners big ships used to come quite close there. Never coming all the way but they had a small tender, as they called it, which took the people out to their liner. But it's farming, it's a farming county. Ireland is mostly agriculture.

(countermark 8:45)

MJ: No fishing then in that area?  
TF: There is some fishing...yah. Yah, there is fishing.  
MJ: But traditionally, your family were farmers.  
TF: My farmers. We were good bit in from the sea really, we...well the ocean came in the nearest part, I would say, would be about seven miles from the Atlantic Ocean.  
MJ: But you were more familiar with rural country life then you were with the sea coast.  
TF: Yes, we had nothing really any purpose with the sea. No.  
MJ: I was curious, do you suppose that your, your a gardener and there's been articles in the paper written about you as a gardener here in Cheyenne. Do you suppose some of that comes from your farming background?  
TF: It probably does. I like, eventhough I was small fella...about ten or eleven years old. I remember one time when I came home from school there was a package for me...came in the mail. And I was so delighted it get, you know, a kid getting a package in the mail and it was from my uncle in London. And it was a package of garden seeds...seeds of flowers and vegetables. And so I couldn't get out soon enough to plant them. To plant those seeds. Those vegetables

and ever since then, you know, I have in interest in gardening. And of course, we were farmers. My father was a farmer.

MJ: You were the oldest?

TF: I was the oldest.

MJ: Of nine children.

TF: Nine children .

MJ: But one brother passed away?

TF: Yah.

MJ: At birth?

TF: Yah...no, he was about nine months old.

MJ: Was it croup or something else?

TF: Yah, he had pneumonia.

MJ: Yah, yah people, they didn't have much to deal...they couldn't deal with it very easily.

TF: No...I remember, he died at home. But the Doctor would come, you know, and look at him. But they couldn't do anything about it.

MJ: Where your parents pretty happy with their situation? Here they had, after your brother died, had four girls - four boys. People to help do the housework, kids to help do the housework, kids to help till the fields. I mean, your father must of been satisfied man.

TF: He was, he was a...we were very happy! And we had no telephone, no television, no washing machine or we had just an open fireplace. And all the heat was provided by peat. We used to cut the peat the "tuff" we called it.

(countermark 11:14)

MJ: You used to have to cut peat?

TF: Yah.

MJ: How do you do that? I mean is it...coal?

TF: I never did it but my father did. Yes, they had what they called the "bogs". And you just...you don't have to dig down. It's on the surface. And they have a special spad or a shlim...they call it a shlim. And dig down and dig up the sod , the sod was a tuff.

MJ: This was like earth then.

TF: Yah, it usually was very soft and wet. He toss it up...he dig it out and toss to another man who caught it in his hands. And put it in a wheel-barrel. And carried it a short distance away and spread...put it on the ground so it would dry. So when the tuff was cut, peat, it was wet and soggy so it had to dry. So we left it there for maybe a couple of months.

MJ: Did it burn wet?

TF: Oh, yes...it burned very well.

MJ: This is burning dirt but it's not quite dirt.

TF: It's a...well it's decayed vegetation...well packed.

MJ: Okay.

TF: It's a...sometimes you come across the roots of trees, Page 6

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you come along and find roots of trees and...it's hard work digging it because it's wet and heavy...soggy. But they cut the tuff around in the month of May. That's a great time, you know, they get together, you know, and help each other and they celebrate and have alot of fun doing it.

MJ: Do you remember some of the holidays...in Ireland?

TF: Yah, I do...We had, you know, we played a game of hurling. You ever heard of huddeling, you know?

MJ: I understand you were a hurler?

TF: I was.

MJ: And I don't know what that is.

TF: I was a pretty good one too (laugh).

MJ: I see! I see by the records here you were pretty good.

TF: Well, I'll tell you something else too that I won, and now I'm not bosting, but I won in high school, in the high school weight throwing championship...for the pro-pump shot. It was off shoulder, I would be all Ireland championship.

MJ: All Ireland?

TF: Yah, in 1938. That's a fact, I did it!

MJ: Has that record been broken?

TF: It sure has...oh, yes. Matter of fact, I didn't even break the record at that day. And which was the best throw that day.

MJ: You have to be pretty strong to throw this.

TF: Well...it was best of that year or that particular year 1938. I throw it for same year, you see, all the colleges well we called them colleges but they were high schools. We would-there would be equivalent to high schools here. And so they were represented in Dublin, and for the national championships. And I won the weight throwing and I got a medal for that...an all Ireland medal.

MJ: Well, that's great!

TF: I can show you that medal. (laugh)

MJ: I would like to take a look at that plus some of the other medals you've won. I know that's not the only one. When you hurl something then it's like the shot-put?

TF: No, this was the shot-put, a 12 pound shot-put.

MJ: Yes, that I word (note\*\* unclear on sentence)

TF: Now the hurling is more like field hockey, you have a stik.

MJ: Like lacrosse?

TF: Yah...I think...I'm not exactly sure what lacrosse is but .....

MJ: They have a net on the end of a stick.

TF: No, there's no net. Well I have a stick. I have a hockey stick.

MJ: It's like a hockey stick.

TF: With a probe, you see, and a handle. And a small ball is, it's like a tennis ball, but it has a leather cover on it.

MJ: It's hard.

TF: It's hard, oh it's very hard. And we call it the "shlicker", Page 7

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the shlicker, that is an Irish word - shlicker. And...but there would be fifteen men on a team. And there would be fifteen on the opposing team. So, the idea was that the full length hockey field was 160 yards long, 160 yards by 80 or 90, so it was a big field. But there would be thirty men on the field. And they wouldn't all follow the ball like here, you had a particular part in the play. The goal keeper always stayed at the goal, it was something like soccer, you know. You see, they keep their places.

MJ: Sure.

TF: And...you move around a bit but you usually you were assigned a particular place to play.

MJ: What was your position?

TF: I was put in central half-back. Central half-back, I mean that's Greek to you know but to an Irishmen that means he gets it right away...central half-back.

MJ: He gets the ball right away.

TF: No...but he'll understand what I would say. Yah, the full-back is...left full-back, right full-back, then you have the central half-back then you have the central right, central left, and then the goal post here. You have the goal keeper there. The full-back is here in front of him. Then here is the back...three of them this is how they're placed. You have two center field men then you have three forwards, three half-forwards as they call them, and three full-forwards.

#### **countermark 17:34**

MJ: Oh boy!

TF: So, we would...this team would be playing into the other tries score there, the opposing team would be scoring in here, you see. Now there would be each...the other team. the opposing team would have a man knocking each one of these, you see.

MJ: Checking each one.

TF: Yah, probably...you know, when you see the one cup. The one cup in soccer...would be played the summer in Italy.

MJ: Oh...okay.

TF: In June or July. You get some idea in soccer, you know soccer, is...they have eleven men but they do keep their places, you see, they keep their places more or less in the field.

MJ: Well, are these...do they still play - do they still hurl?

TF: Oh...yes, yes.

MJ: It's still a pretty popular sport.

TF: Oh it is. It's not...actually it's the national sport.

MJ: You don't hear anything about it over here.

TF: Well, they put on TV on ST. Patrick's Day (laugh). Good

American subject to Irish culture, they put it on TV on (laugh). Well you here it in the East, back in the eastern New York. They play the game in New York and Boston. The Irish 'lovies', the Irish guys who come over, you know, they keep it alive and keep playing it. And it has deteriorated a lot recently because they don't have enough of young people coming over to...although they're beginning to come again.

MJ: Do they still play it in the colleges?

TF: Oh, yes. . .of course the other, you know, since TV even american football...as a matter of fact, I think there are some american teams of football is picking up over there.

MJ: Really!

TF: The kids watch their TV, and they begin to play! Honest to God!

MJ: I would think that rugby would be big because the English are big rugby fans.

TF: Yah, they have. . .

MJ: And you would think that the Irish and the English would be battling it out on the rugby field.

TF: They have an rugby team, an Irish rugby team. And matter of fact, the English beat them badly just a couple of weeks ago, they leave them about 25 to nothing. Yah, it was a disgrace.

MJ: Now how do you know that?

TF: (laugh) How do I know that! Oh...I keep up! Yes, I do! There are all kinds of papers, you know. They publish the Irish papers in New York, San Francisco, and all Irish news and they...and you can subscribe to these papers. They come every weekly.

MJ: They're weekly.

TF: Weekly papers, yah.

MJ: Now, do you get the main Irish publication through New York or is it published right in New York?

TF: It's published in New York.

MJ: So, you couldn't get the Dublin Chronicle or whatever it is?

TF: No...you wouldn't get it here.

MJ: Dublin Daily Times.

TF: You would probably get in New York but not here.

MJ: I see...why couldn't you have it sent over? It would be too late?

TF: It would be too late. The best only way to get it would be by airmail and that would be expensive. They would send it to you by airmail then, as a matter of fact, they would. But it would be expensive and big problem is...late.

MJ: Now, how do you keep up on the local news, the Galway area news?

TF: Well, my niece sent me a letter yesterday. And she gave me some of the local news. (laugh)

MJ: You are still interested in it though, aren't you?

TF: Yah, yah, sure...they send it to me, you know. What did Page 9



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she say now...she spoke about the local hurling team, you know. Yah, they had a good one under twenty-one, the players under twenty-one and of course, she had two or three brothers playing on that team. And she said, well they got beaten in the final, the county final. She mentioned that.

MJ: Now, there's a romantic song that's been written "On Galway Bay".

TF: Galway Bay.

MJ: With Bing Crosby singing.

TF: Bing Crosby.

MJ: Right?

TF: Yes, that's right.

MJ: Okay, now that song, when I think about it, conjures up a memory...not a memory, a vision of a beautiful romantic setting...what was it like there, is that the way it was?

TF: When does the song go now "On Galway Bay"? Well, that is what I say when the sun goes down over Galway Bay, it is a beautiful sight, you know. When it isn't raining, or the clouds when you can see the sun, I used to have...I had a very great-uncle, I mean he was a great old man and a great uncle. He was my father's brother. And he lived a lot of his years in Australia, he had gone out to Australia as a young man. And come back, and of course, was he was used to the warm weather in Australia, and so he came back to Ireland. And he was farming in Ireland, and he used to get very disgusted with the Irish weather. And he used to, you know you talk about Ireland being romantic, but he would say, "Ireland is a shovel of mud in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean...(laugh)...Ireland is a shovel of mud in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean." Which, was in a way, to truth because it rains alot and he quote these songs and poems they talk very romantic but. . .

MJ: Do you miss that though...do you miss that environment?

TF: I do, I do...I miss the seasons and the trees, you know, and the grass is green all the year round. And a lot of the wild vegetation, you know, and I miss the rivers, you know, it's green and I miss, I do. When I went back a year ago, you see, I was back there a little over a year ago. And this was in January

**counter 23:54**